

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO:

MR. TROTTER

DATE: 10-17-68

FROM:

C. E. Ganley

SUBJECT:

JAMES EARL RAY
LATENT FINGERPRINT EVIDENCE

James Earl Ray is the accused slayer of Martin Luther King. He was apprehended in London, England, on 6-8-68 and extradited to the United States on 7-19-68 and is currently awaiting trial in Memphis, Tennessee, on state homicidal charges. In order for Ray to be extradited from England, the United States Government was required to present detailed testimony as to (a) the identity of the individual and (b) his alleged implication as King's slayer. To establish these points, at the Department's request, Bureau transported Latent Fingerprint Examiner George Bonebrake to London where he presented expert fingerprint testimony on 6-27-68. Bonebrake's testimony received widespread publicity in the news media throughout the world. As a matter of fact, he was the only witness presented by the United States Government and this was made much of by the world press.

On 10-16-68 Charles Edmundson, newspaper reporter for the Memphis "Commercial Appeal" got wind of a story that had been printed by the Wichita, Kansas, "Beacon" newspaper on 9-12-68 covering a police school that Bonebrake had conducted at Wichita in early September. (News Reporter Edmundson and Defense Attorney Arthur Hanes, Sr., are currently under contempt citations issued by Memphis Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle, such citations having been issued on 9-30-68 accusing Edmundson and Hanes of violating the trial judge's order barring extrajudicial statements in the Ray case. Edmundson and Hanes have apparently dredged up the Wichita, Kansas, "Beacon" news story in an attempt to offset the court's action against themselves.)

Mr. Bonebrake, who is on annual leave, has been contacted concerning the allegation that he unnecessarily aired the fingerprint testimony in this case before a police school in Wichita, Kansas, in early September. Bonebrake states that when he appeared before the class they already knew - through the prior extensive publicity concerning his London, England, testimony - that he was the fingerprint expert in the Ray case. On one occasion, members of the class, in a closed session, attempted

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CEG:hs
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1 - Mr. Rosen
1 - Mr. Bishop

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to query him as to the details of the fingerprint testimony. Bonebrake states that he gave no facts other than what had already been quoted by the press concerning his London, England, testimony and this was in a very brief fashion. No members of the press were present. On another occasion during the class at the instigation of the local police department, members of the press were briefly invited to take photographs and to collect data for a press story on this school. One member of the class who seemed friendly with the reporter mentioned that Bonebrake had been the fingerprint expert who had given testimony in London. The reporter then said he recalled Bonebrake's name. No further questions were asked and no other information was volunteered by Mr. Bonebrake at this session or any other sessions of the class. Bonebrake states unequivocally that any quotations in the press otherwise are outright fabrications and falsehoods.

Don Owens Memphis teletype of 10-16-68 poses certain questions as propounded by [REDACTED] former FBI Agent and member of panel of attorneys assisting Judge Battle in connection with contempt hearings against Reporter Edmundson and Attorney Hanes. Queries in essence ask for specifications on allegations made by Edmundson. Attached teletype instructs Memphis to contact [REDACTED] and furnish full facts as set *Owens* forth herein pointing out that when Bonebrake testified in London such testimony became public source material and that any further elaboration from any other source is pure fabrication.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Approval of attached teletype.

Bonebrake
talked too
much

↑ longer. He
should have had
more tact with the
press.

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However, considered discrediting him, John Hartung says.